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General Elections 1984 in Gokilapuram Village

A Case Study of Voting Behaviour

by

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The most widely-held interpretation of the sweeping verdict of the general elections of December 1984 is that it reflected a powerful mass urge for the unity and integrity of India, one that was linked up and helped along by the sympathy factor; the result represented a nation-wide expression of revulsion and protest at the killing of Mrs.Gandhi and an endorsement of her son as political successor. Although, as some perceptive commentators had pointed out during the campaign, many substantive issues that would have figured in a contest held in less extraordinary circumstances were unfocused and even obscured, and although much of the election rhetoric was weak in clearly defined policy alternatives, Rajiv Gandhi's message that his party was able to hold India together was accepted by the electorate, while opposition campaigners at the national level were unable to move voters. The election results were also seen as a mandate for change; for cleaner, more effective and just government.

This is an attempt to describe the general elections of December 1984 as they took place in a constituency -- the Cumbum Assembly constituency and the Cumbum segment of the Periyakulam parliamentary constituency -- in southwestern Madurai district, Tamil Nadu; to assess voters' attitudes to try and see what form national issues took at the level of a constituency and in a village -- its name is Gokilapuram -- in it.

I. Introduction

The Pandiyan Roadways bus from Madurai to Kumili (which is on the border with Kerala, near Thekkady) goes on the east to west trunk road, through dry tracts and across the Andipatti range, to Theni. It emerges from the crowded streets of this busy, rapidly growing town and swings southwestwards, crosses the bridge over the Periyar at Veerapandi and makes its way into the Cumbum Valley. By the time it approaches Chinnamanur,

the first Valley town on this route --- famous for its canals and paddy fields and for copperplate inscriptions of the Pandiya kingdom - it is clear to even the first-time visitor or the most untrained eye that this is a distinct agrarian region, a place where the land is more bounteous and agriculture relatively advanced.

The Cumbum Valley is shaped, roughly speaking, like an inverted triangle with a rounded apex, wedged between the Cardamom Hills, whose watershed marks the western and southwestern wall of the Valley (and the border with Kerala) and the High Way and Varushanad hills in the east and southeast. The geographical area of the Cumbum Valley more or less coincides with the Uthamapalayam taluk, consisting of four blocks -- Cumbum, Uthamapalayam, Chinnamanur and Bodinayakkanur -- about 50 villages in all. The population of the taluk at the Census of 1981 was 483,565 of which 59.41 percent lived in rural areas and 40.59 per cent in its towns.

Administrative reports and memoirs of the Valley of the nineteenth century speak of it as the most fertile area of the Madurai district. At that time, the major source of surface irrigation was from the Suruliyar-Vairavanar river system; from the turn of this century, the waters of the Periyar river have been dammed and diverted eastwards from Thekkady in Kerala and through the river beds of the Valley. Today, the central core of the Valley consists of land irrigated by canals and systems tanks that are part of the Periyar system - a rich green core of land that is marked by the specialised cultivation of double-cropped high-yielding paddy, to the almost complete exclusion of every other crop.

Around the Periyar tract is lift-irrigated land (irrigated by wells, that are almost invariably fitted with electric pumps), the thottam or garden land of the Valley. There is great diversity in the crops grown on thottam -- cotton, banana, grapes, tomato, cabbage, beet root, onion and other vegetables, jasmine, marigold, sunflower, ragi, cholam and others -- and it is not uncommon to be at a village that has more than ten crops being grown on its thottam. Cultivation on thottam is highly commercialised, it requires high investment, it is often price-responsive and risk-exposed.

Scattered between the thottam and stretching beyond it to the foothills is the unirrigated land of the Valley, dry land that "looks up to the sky". Except in the very south of the Valley near Gudalur, dry land cultivation represents a very backward sector of agriculture, with a relatively unchanging concentration on coarse grain and oil seeds. Here agriculture is reduced to being pursued as traditional craft, near a state of ruin -- the soil is scratched with a plough, seeds broadcast and little care taken of the crop until the time comes for a meagre harvest.

The vanguard agriculture of the Cumbum Valley, with its relatively developed level of agricultural technique, draws on a numerically preponderant, largely settled force of agricultural labourers, supplanted by seasonal inflows -- mainly during the groundnut harvest in August and September -- of migratory labour. The proportion of agricultural labourers in the working population of the taluk has increased steeply over the past two decades; at the Census of 1981 agricultural labourers were 60.46 percent of the working population in the rural areas of the taluk, which is the highest occurrence among all taluks in Tamil Nadu except one, Thiruvarur in Thanjavur district.

This increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers in the Valley is a process that has occurred not only in its villages, but in its towns as well. A feature of recent development is that even in the town of the taluk, by the Census of 1981, 53.17 percent of the work force consists of agricultural labourers and 65.43 percent were either agricultural labourers or cultivators.

The increase in the general level of agricultural development has been accompanied by an increase in inequality: at one extremity of the inequality scale are those big landlords who have wet land holdings in the Periyar tract, cardamom estates in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and who have invested money in converting dry land in the Valley to land irrigated by wells fitted with electric pumps. Some of these families also have business interests and some are into money-lending as well. At the other end of the scale are the agricultural labourers, other rural manual labourers and the poorest sections of the peasantry. Here is an illustration of the kind of skewness that exists in the distribution of assets among the households of one village, Gokilapuram (this is from a survey of 650 households taken in the village in 1977):

Assets of major landlord and landless agricultural labourer households, Gokilapuram

Class (1)	Number (2)	(2) as percent of all households (3)	total assets owned (in ruppes) (4)	(4) as percent of all assets in the village (5)
Landless agricultural labourer households	257	40	564226	2.7
Major landlord households	11	1.7	10335899	49.5

Landless agricultural labourer households, who constitute 40 percent of the population own less than 3 percent of assets held by all households, while major landlord households, who are less than 2 percent of the population, own almost 50 percent of its assets. Further, the <u>aggregate</u> assets of 257 agricultural labourer households are only about 60 percent of the assets of <u>each</u> major landlord household. And the pattern of distribution of land and wealth in the village today is such that the sources of future accummulation lie primarily in the hands of those among whom wealth is concentrated today.

With these socio-economic conditions as backdrop, what has been the pattern of voter behaviour in the region? This is an attempt to answer that question, a report from a study of voter behaviour in the Cumbum Valley, where we have been involved in social sciences research for the past seven years and a half. It concentrates on the election in the Cumbum Assembly constituency and the Cumbum Assembly segment of the Periyakulam parliamentary constituency. The Cumbum constituency covers the two blocks of Cumbum and Uthamapalyam and the estate areas in the eastern, High Way hills. In this election, the Assembly election was won by the candidate of the AIADMK, S.Subburayar, and the parliament seat by P.Selvendran of the AIADMK, who also won a lead in the Cumbum Assembly segment.

Results of elections, Cumbum Assembly constituency, December 1984

Candidate's name and party	Valid votes polled	(2) as percent of column total
(1)	(2)	(3)
S.Subburayar, AIADMK	52,228	52.17
N.Ramakrishnan, DMK	47,005	46.95
S.Pichai, Independent	301	0.30
M.Gopal, Independent	127	0.13
Amjad Ibrahim, Independent	125	0.12
K.Subburayar, Independent	87	0.09
A.Rajendran, Independent	84	0.08
S.S.Rajendran, Independent	84	0.08
M.S.Ponnusamy, Independent	77	0.07
	100,118	100.00

Results of elections, Periyakulam parliamentary constituency, December 1984

Candidate's name and party	Periyakulam parliamentary constituency		Cumbum Assembly segment	
	Valid votes polled	%	Valid votes polled	%
P.Selvendran, AIADMK	3,48,903	62.90	57,753	57.48
S.Agni Raju, DMK	1,90,290	34.30	42,013	41.81
K.Palanisami, Independent	5,376	0.97	51	0.05
K.Surulivelu, "	5,122	0.92	218	0.22
K.Ayyadurai, "	2,418	0.44	183	0.18
S.S.Sailani, "	1,125	0.20	149	0.15
K.Jayamani, "	837	0.15	35	0.03
A.Rajendran, "	633	0.11	75	0.07
Total	5,54,704	100.00	1,00,477	100.00

The rest of this report is organised as follows: Section II deals with past trends in voting behaviour in the Valley; section III with the campaign issues and major candidates of 1984; section IV with the results of the survey of voters in Gokilapuram and K.K.Patti; section V is a description of polling and counting days and the last section is an analysis of the booth-wise results from the constituency.

As part of this study, we did a survey of voters in two villages, Gokilapuram and Kamayakavandanpatti (also called K.K.Patti). Gokilapuram is a predominantly canal-irrigated village, about five kilometres to the east of the taluk centre at Uthamapalayam. It had a population of 3,945 persons at the Census of 1981, and it is a village in which we have done detailed socioeconomic surveys over the past few years. K.K. Patti, about five or six kilometres to the east of Cumbum town and to the south of Gokilapuram, is a larger village (population: 10033 persons at the Census of 1971), with significant sectors of wet-land (nanjai) cultivation and thottam cultivation.

Size of electorate, General Elections, December 1984

Constituency	Electorate		
	Men	Women	Persons
Cumbum Assembly	68,142	68,588	1,36,730
Periyakulam Parliamentary	4,00,196	4,01,280	8,01,476

VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN THE VALLEY: PAST TRENDS

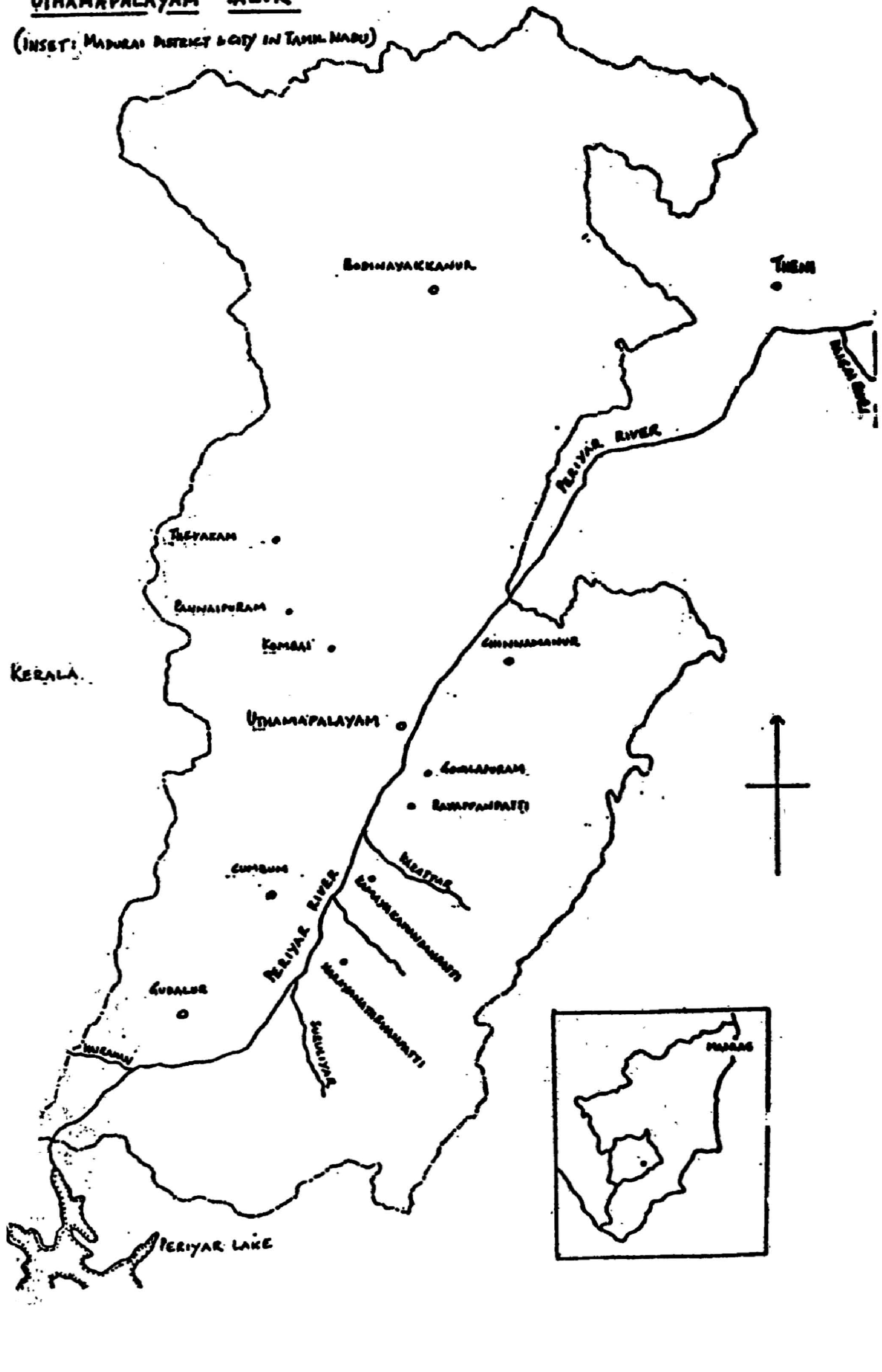
The Cumbum Valley is an area where (and this is a feature that it shares with other regions in the district and State) after a considerable period of dominance, the Congress Party was overwhelmed and supplanted by the electoral onslaught of the DMK in the 1960s. After 1971 (and that year's election marks an interesting exception), elections have been contests, fought with varying degrees of closeness, between candidates of the two at-each-other's throat factions of the erstwhile united DMK.

We have material relating to successive elections in the Valley from 1937 onwards.

At the elections to the Provincial Legislature in 1937, the Valley was part of the Periyakulam general rural constituency; the franchise was limited to persons who met literacy/property qualifications. This election was fought in the aftermath of the Great Depression of 1929-34, a crisis that affected the agrarian economy deeply, when the prices of produce collapsed and levels of indebtedness increased tremendously. The Congress at that time put forward an agrarian programme, albeit a restricted one, and the agrarian demands in the programme were combined with the demand for political independence from British rule. Its candidate, Sakthivadivel Gounder, a member of a Vokkaliga landlord family of Kamaya-Kavundanpatti in the south east of the Valley, was opposed by P.T.Rajan of the Justice Party. P.T.Rajan, Minister in the dyarchy regime and recipient of a knighthood, belonged to a major Mudaliar landlord family that had (and continues to have, although on a diminished scale) vast wet landholdings all along the Periyar tracts and which occupied an important sociopolitical position among the landlord families of the Valley and the district. Their holdings -- of surface --

UTHAMAPALAYAM TALUK

(INSET: MADURAI DISTRICT & CITY IN TAMIL NADU)



irrigated, lift-irrigated and dry land and of groves and plantation land -- are located in different parts of the Valley and district; the family seat, then and now, has been at Uthamapalayam.

By 1937, E.V.Ramaswami had given up the Erode programme and was in collaboration with the Justice party, and although the major impact of the social reform movement led by him was beginning to be felt in different parts of rural Tamil Nadu, in the elections of 1937 the Justice party was clearly identified by the people as a party of pro-British and landlord groupings who, in troubled times, had no real alternative programme for the people. Though the electorate was restricted, it voted overwhelmingly for the Congress and against the Justice Party: Sakthivadivel Gounder won 24,742 or 72.5 percent of the valid vote to P.T.Rajan's 9372 (27.5 percent of the valid vote).

In 1946, the Congress won the Periyakulam general rural seat unopposed.

By 1952, the first general election, the political situation had changed. Although the Congress did come out of the election as the major seat-winner, it did not make a clean sweep of Madurai district; it won 16 out of 22 seats, the rest going to 2 independents, one to the All India Forward Bloc (Marxist), 2 to Communists and to the lone Justice Party member of the 1952 Assembly. P.Ramamurti -- who was a candidate at the Madurai North constituency and who fought and won the elections from jail in 1952 -- makes the point that the non-Congress vote in the Tamil districts of Madras State reflected, to a significant degree, the influence of the Dravidan movement led by Periyar. Periyar did not allow his disciples to stand for elections, but he campaigned energetically for opposition candidates in different parts

of the State: in his campaign, he indicated the Congress for its failure to provide adequate and regular rations -- (food was an important issue in the 1952 elections); he attacked Government repression of the CPI in constituencies where there were Communist candidates; and he tirelessly propagated the social reform, anti-Brahman and language-based platform of the Dravida Kazhagam. No DMK candidates stood for elections, but the non-Congress vote in the Tamil areas in the elections represented, in a sense, a latent DMK vote, incipient support for the party that was to climb steadily, and finally spectacularly, to a position of power in the late 1960s.

There were two Assembly constituencies that fell in the area of the Valley in 1952 -- Cumbum and Uthamapalayam. In Uthamapalayam, the Congress faced a Socialist (and self-declared trotskyist), M.Muthaiah, and at Cumbum, P.T.Rajan. At Cumbum, there was also a Communist candidate, Jamal Mohideen (who was from the Karutha Rowther family, big landlord-rentiers and cardamom plantation owners, with a tradition of money-lending as well), who had been active in the CPI-led tenants' movement in the Valley in the 1940s and had been imprisoned during the Party's illegal period.

In Uthamapalayam, the Congress defeated the Socialist candidate.

UTHAMAPALAYAM ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY: GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1952.

NAME & PARTY OF CANDIDATE		VALID VOTES POLLED	
		Number	%
A.S. Subbaraj, Congress	-	25939	48.56
M.Muthiah, Socialist	-	17069	31.96
Sonaimuthu, Independent	-	8836	16.54
Ramasami Servai, Praja Socialist	-	1570	2.94
		53414	100.00

The Cumbum results are interesting. P.T.Rajan stood in two constituencies in 1952. He was defeated roundly at Madurai North, Ramamurti's constituency that year, where he lost his deposit, while he won in Cumbum. A person who voted in the elections of 1952 described PTR's victory in this way: "News of PTR's defeat at Madurai came to us before polling day at Cumbum (in 1952, counting was not all on the same day) and voters in his Valley constituency were exhorted to make good the blow that the voters of Madurai had dealt to the prestige of this big man of our area." P.Ramamurty suggests that Periyar's supporters, who voted for him at Madurai, may have voted for P.T. Rajan at Cumbum.

CUMBUM ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY: GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1952

NAME AND PARTY OF CANDIDATE		VALID VOTES POLLED	
		Number	%
P.T.Rajan, Justice	-	24140	43.49
S.K.Ahamed Meeran, Congress	-	12781	23.03
Kottaisami Thevar, Independent	-	9680	17.44
Jamal Mohideen, CPI	-	8101	14.60
Vellaichami, Socialist	-	803	1.44
		55505	100.00

In 1957, the Congress won 16 out of 20 seats in the district. The DMK nominated its own candidates in 6, but did not win any. In Uthamapalayam, P.T.Rajan was once again a candidate, this time as an independent, and he lost to the Congress.

UTHAMAPALAYAM ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY: GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1957

NAME AND PARTY OF CANDIDATE	VALID VOTES POLLED Number	%
K.Pandiaraj, Congress -	30559	53.60
P.T.Rajan, Independent -	24256	42.55
S.N.Ponnusamy, Independent -	2193	3.85
	57008	100.00

In 1962, Uthamapalayam (along with the neighbouring constituency of Theni and Athoor in Dindigul taluk) was one of the three constituencies in the district where the DMK made its first electoral breakthrough: M.Rajangam, the 25 year old DMK candidate, who was from a landed Kallar family of Gudalur in the south of the Valley (persons of the caste are scattered across different parts of the region), defeated the Congress candidate by a narrow margin.

UTHAMAPALAYAM ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY: GENERAL ELECTIONS,1962

NAME AND PARTY OF CANDIDATE	VALID VOTES POLLED Number	%
M.Rajangam, DMK -	28907	43.0
K.S.Rajagopal, Congress -	27368	40.7
Venkitasamy Gowder, CPI -	9674	14.4
K.V.Rengasamy Gowder,Swatantra-	1297	1.9
	67246	100.00

The elections of 1967 marked something of a turning point. For almost two decades, the DMK had been active in mobilising support. It built on the popular appeal and mass support of

Periyar's social reform movement, raised the demand for state autonomy, and, in subsequent years, greatly emphasised the Tamil-related aspects of its platform. Through books, magazines, pamphlets and other forms of popular literature with which its political programme was deftly interwoven; through films and the theatre; from the speaking-platform and by means of direct agitation (the most important of which was the anti-Hindi movement of 1965); the propaganda and demagoguery of the DMK swept campuses and towns and penetrated deep into the villages. Its activists effectively played upon the hopes and aspirations -- and the prejudices -- of the people, they convincingly exposed Congress misrule, and by 1967 they were able to harness widespread popular discontent with the Congress regime into a powerful electoral force.

In Madurai district, once called a Congress bastion, the DMK and its allies the CPI(M), the Swatantra Party and an independent won 19 out of 22 seats. In Cumbum, Rajangam once again defeated the Congress candidate and the DMK also won, for the first time, the Periyakulam parliament seat.

CUMBUM ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY: GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1962

NAME AND PARTY OF CANDIDATE		VALID VOTES POLLED	
		Number	%
M. Rajangam, DMK	-	41440	59.66
N.S.K S.Pandiaraj, Congress	-	28025	40.34
		69465	100.00

PERIYAKULAM PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY: GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1967

NAME AND PARTY OF CANDIDATE		VALID VOTES POLLED	
		Number	%
H.Ajmal Khan, Swatantra	-	183593	45.3
M.Ibrahim, Congress	-	155972	38.5
M.Muthiah, Independent	-	65329	16.1
		404894	100.00

The elections of 1967 are also distinguished for new levels of voter participation -- of men and women and of the urban and rural electorate.

To quickly review the general elections of the post-1967 period, in 1971, Cumbum was one of the few seats in Tamil Nadu won by the Congress-O. It was won by a very narrow margin (and was helped along by a split in the vote caused by a third CPI(M), candidate).

CUMBUM ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY: GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1971

NAME AND PARTY OF CANDIDATE		VALID VOTES POLLED	
		Number	%
K.P.Gopal, Congress-O	-	34483	48.87
P.S.Chelladurai, DMK	-	33806	47.91
P.Husain Meer, CPI(M)	-	2273	3.22
		70562	100.00

From 1977 onwards, every election to Cumbum Assembly seat and the Periyakulam parliamentary seat has had the DMK and the AIADMK as the major contending parties and, with the exception of the midterm parliamentary elections of 1980, the AIADMK has won every time. In 1977, following on the Emergency and in alliance with the Congress (I), it won the parliament seat by a margin of more than two lakhs, gaining 69.65 percent of the valid vote to the DMK's 26.26 percent in the constituency as a whole, and 68.1 percent in the Cumbum Assembly segment.

PERIYAKULAM PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY, CUMBUM ASSEMBLY SEGMENT: GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1977

NAME AND PARTY OF CANDIDATE		VALID VOTES POLLED	
		Number	%
Ramaswamy, AIADMK	-	59898	68.14%
Palanivelrajan, DMK	-	26192	29.80
Andi Thevar, Independent	-	1022	1.16
Surulivelu, Independent	-	602	0.68
Gunasekaran, Independent	-	193	0.22
		87907	100.00

At the Assembly election of 1977, in alliance now with another set of parties, including the CPI and the CPI(M) and excluding the Congress(I), the AIADMK narrowly won the Cumbum seat (the Congress(I) and Janata candidates lost their deposits).

CUMBUM ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY: GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1977

NAME AND PARTY OF CANDIDATE		VALID VOTES POLLED	
		Number	%
R.Chandrasekharan, AIADMK	-	34902	41.0
N.Natarajan, DMK	-	34080	40.1
S.Abdulkadar Marakayar, Congress	-	11329	13.8
C.K.Jayaprakash, Janata	-	2856	3.9
S.N.Ponnuchamy, Independent	-	477	0.6
K.Surulivelu, Independent	-	465	0.6
		84109	100.00

At the parliamentary elections of January 1980 the DMK and Congress(I), electoral allies once again after nine years, won the majority of seats in the State and all four parliamentary seats in the district and led in 18 of the 22 component Assembly segments. N.Natarajan of the DMK won the Periyakulam seat, winning in four of the six Assembly segments, including Cumbum.

PERIYAKULAM PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY, CUMBUM ASSEMBLY SEGMENT: GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1980

NAME AND PARTY OF CANDIDATE		VALID VOTES POLLED	
		Number	%
Cumbum N.Natarajan, DMK	-	51326	55.07
S.Ramasamy, AIADMK	-	40855	43.83
K.Surulivelu, Independent	-	1026	1.10
		93207	100.00

The situation was reversed five months later, at the Legislative Assembly elections, when the AIADMK alliance won 18 seats to the DMK-Congress alliance's 4. Cumbum was won by the AIADMK.

CUMBUM ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY: GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1980

NAME AND PARTY OF CANDIDATE		VALID VOTES POLLED	
		Number	%
R.T.Gopalan, AIADMK	-	47577	49.20
A.K.Mahendiran, DMK	-	35395	36.60
D.K.R.Gudalur Chandrasekharan Independent	-	12800	13.24
+ 3 Independents		924	0.96
		96696	100.00

In 1982, there was occasion for an interesting trial of electoral strength in the region. Cumbum N.Natarajan, the DMK member of parliament, who had been a successful, high-profile M.P., died in May 1982. He was the son of a school teacher cum landlord of Cumbum, Narayanaswami Gounder. In addition to land in the Valley, the family had considerable cardamom plantation holdings on the Kerala side of the border, and the family's wealth rocketed with the cardamom boom of the mid-seventies. Natarajan had a striking physical presence -- well-built and over six foot two tall, with grey-streaked hair combed back and a truly impressive moustache (when people describe him, they stand on their toes and draw their fingers dramatically across upper lip and cheek, to indicate height and handlebar). His reputation is of one who was quick to grasp issues; he was known to give in charity; the son of a school teacher, he had a certain natural common touch: he went to the birth, wedding, death and other ceremonies of families of different castes in different parts of the Valley, he conducted conversations with courtesy (an agricultural labourer in the village said that "even to talk to people like us, he would get down from his car and salute us"), and as an M.P., his brother recalls, he once actively intervened when Harijan houses at a site in Theni were being demolished.

In Parliament, he kept in close touch with his constituency, raising demands for a railway line to Gudalur and to convert the Valley's main trunk road into a national highway. He worked continuously for the interests of big cardamom growers, agitating for tax concessions to cardamom plantation owners, working to expedite the import of pesticides for the cardamom crop. He was sensitive to schemes to upgrade agricultural development in the Valley, particularly in respect of profitable garden cultivation. He clearly ranged himself against the cardamom plantation workers' unions in Kerala, particularly against their wage demands (wages on the Kerala side, where

a large section of the work force consists of workers who have migrated from the Valley, are considerably higher than in Tamil Nadu estates) and he also kept alive the diversionary, and potentially divisive, issue of the dispute with Kerala over the Mangaladevi temple.

In the summer of '82, I was in the Valley when the news came of his untimely -- he was in the early 40s -- death and when the body was brought back to Cumbum for cremation. There was a widespread and genuine regret and sympathy among the people of the Valley that could not but affect one, and among the landlords (and particularly the cardamom owners) there was also the general feeling that it would be difficult to replace him; Cumbum Natarajan had caught the DMK's single winning streak in the post-1977 period, and for them he had been much the right man in the right place at the right time.

The distinct feature of -- or, as The Hindu editorialised, the "unusual service" performed by -- the parliamentary by-election that followed Natarajan's death was "to provide an opportunity to measure the independent political strength of the major parties in the fray -- more or less without the obscuring or distorting play of the alliance factor". The contest was between the two leading political forces in the State, and the AIADMK won a "decisive, although not runaway" victory -- Cumbum Natarajan's younger brother, N.Ramakrishnan, lost the election to S.T.K.Jakkayyan, also of a Vokkaliga family of the Valley, although in the Cumbum Assembly segment, the DMK still had a narrow lead.

PERIYAKULAM PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY BY ELECTION, 1982

	VALID VOTES POLLED	
	Number	%
S.T.K. Jakkaiyan, AIADMK	252377	49.71
N.Ramakrishnan, DMK	183117	36.07
K.Sheikh Abdul Khader, Congress(I)	29969	5.90
A.Abdul Wahab, CPI(M)	16366	3.22
M.Ghulam Mohideen, Janata	3901	0.77
+ 20 Independents	21951	4.32
	507681	100.00

PERIYAKULAM PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY, CUMBUM ASSEMBLY SEGMENT: BY ELECTION, 1982.

NAME AND PARTY OF CANDIDATE	VALID VOTES POLLED
	Number
N.Ramakrishnan, DMK	41256
S.T.K.Jakkaiyan, AIADMK	39787
K.Sheikh Abdul Khader, Congress(I)	4573
A.Abdul Wahab, CPI(M)	4025

The election verdict indicated that new social welfare measures -- particularly the Noon Meals Scheme, which had been introduced in July 1982, about two months before the election -- had considerably enhanced the popular image of the Chief Minister, and indicated also a consolidation, in electoral terms, of the influence of the ruling party.

For the Congress (I), this was the second time it had fought an election in Cumbum unencumbered by an alliance and the second time, consequently, that it lost its deposit.

> The party whose claims have been knocked down several rungs is the Congress (I). That its nominee could not secure half of the one-sixth of the valid votes polled --- one-sixth is the minimum required to have the deposit refunded --- does little credit to a national party ruling in Delhi ... In the Periyakulam by-election, the State leadership of the Congress (I) has been exposed in its own image, as it was on one occasion nearly a decade ago (when it contested the Dindigul parliamentary election on its own in May 1973 and lost its deposit a few times over).
>
> (Editorial in The Hindu, September 29, 1982)

Voter behaviour in the Valley: five general features

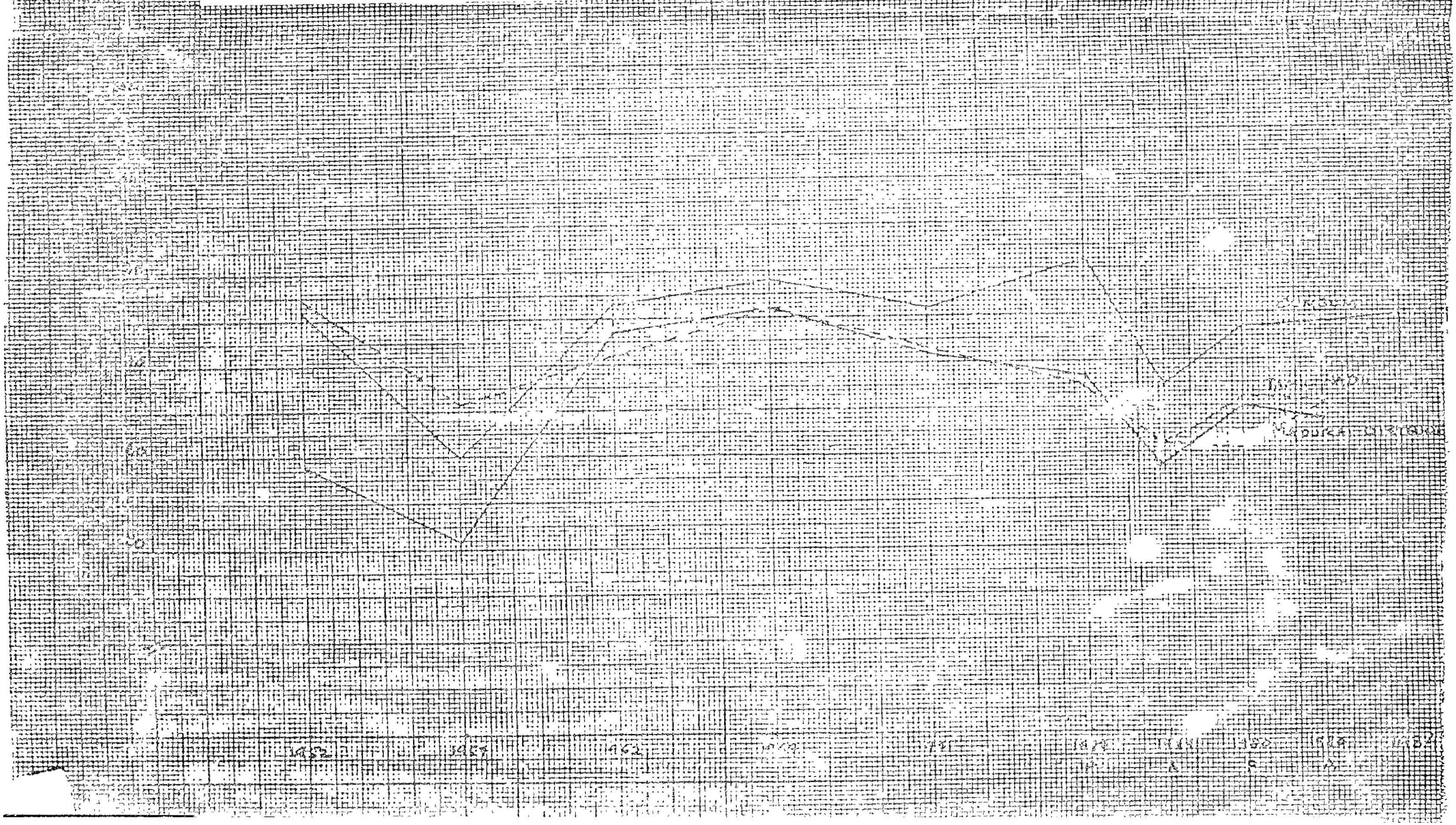
First, the Cumbum, and earlier Uthamapalayam, constituency has had a consistently high voter turnout (see graph 1), it has always had higher turnouts than the district as a whole, and higher turnouts than the State average after 1962, when voter participation climbed in the year of the first DMK victory.

From the high level of 1952, the first enthusiastic general election, voter turnout went into something of a trough in 1957, the election when turnout was the lowest -- at the constituency, district and State level. From the relative apathy of 1957, the graph climbs to 1962 and to a high point in 1967, when the turnout was the highest ever for an Assembly poll in the constituency, and the highest turnout for any election after 1952 in the State. Madurai district and the State average voter turnouts have tended to move in the same direction and, after 1962, close to each other. In the case of Cumbum constituency, the only

Graph: 1

Note: (i) Constituency figures for 1952 are the combined average for Cumbum and Uthamapalayam Constituencies.

(ii) State figures for 1952 are for the whole state of Madras as it was in 1952, including districts that are now part of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala



election where its electorate showed a trend contrary to the district and State was at the Lok Sabha elections of 1977: voter turnout climbed to its highest point, 81 percent, at that election and fell to the lowest since 1957 five months later at the elections to the Assembly. (Graph 1 shows the turnout in the Cumbum Assembly segment of the Periyakulam parliamentary constituency at the Lok Sabha elections of 1977 and 1980 separately because these elections were not held concurrently with Assembly elections.)

The nuance of the time series should not, however, obscure its basic feature: consistently high voter turnout.

Graphs 2 and 3 disaggregate the voter turnout in the constituency into male-female and rural-urban components. (They do not include the figures for the Parliamentary elections of 1977 and 1980, since we do not have separate figures for men-women and rural-urban voter turnout for the separate Assembly components.)

The women's voting percentage in the constituency follows roughly the same pattern as the general voter turnout, reaching significantly new levels in 1967, while male voter turnout continued to climb till 1971, when it crossed 80 percent. For both men and women, the elections of 1957 and the Assembly poll in 1977 represented relatively low levels of participation.

Disaggregating the picture into its rural and urban components, the most significant feature of the graph is the extraordinary increase in rural voter participation in 1967, the unprecedented mobilisation of the rural (as well as the female) electorate by the DMK: 93.95 percent of the electorate in the rural areas of the constituency voted in 1967, and from that year on, rural voter turnout has been higher than urban.

This feature of the 1967 election was not, of course, restricted to Cumbum. In the State as a whole, rural voter turnout was 77.22 percent, and the district average was 78.54 percent. In Madurai, eight constituencies registered voting percentages of more than 80 percent in their rural segments, and in the rural areas of Thirupparankundram (the only constituency in the district that was ahead of Cumbum in this respect), a staggering 96.50 percent of the electorate came to the voting booths.

Secondly, there is a relatively high concentration of votes among the top two candidates; voting behaviour has effectively made for a kind of two-candidate system. Even in the 1977 Assembly elections, when the AIADMK DMK, Congress(I) and the Janata Party stood separately, the top two candidates got more than 80 percent of the valid vote; at the Parliamentary by-elections of 1982, although a whole array of parties and independents stood, the AIADMK and DMK together got more than 85 percent of the vote and all the others lost their deposits.

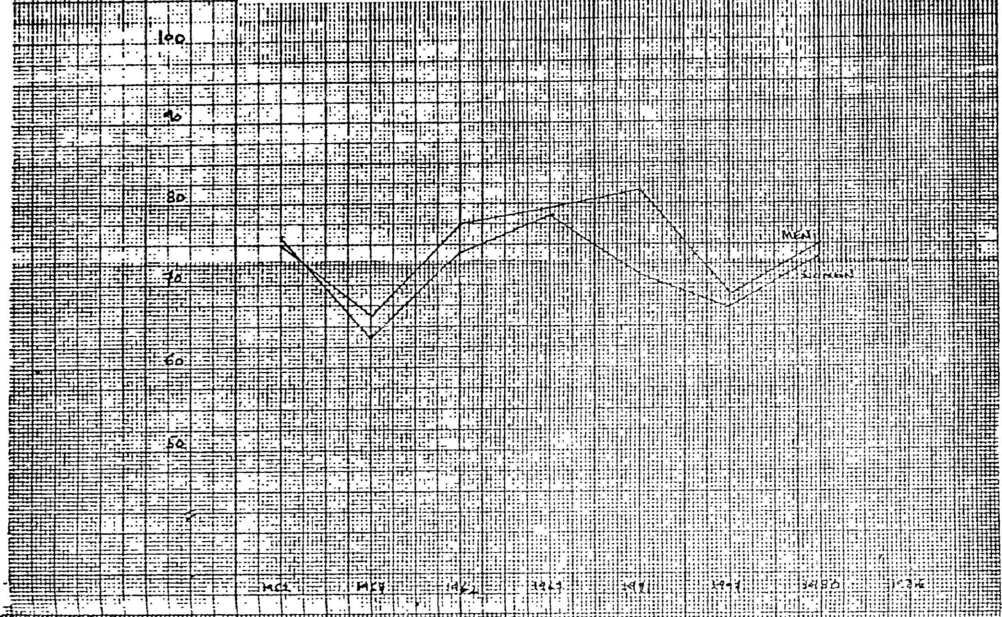
PROPORTION OF VALID VOTES RECEIVED BY TOP TWO CANDIDATES, 1952 to 1984 (in percent)

Year	Cumbum/Uthamapalayam Assembly Constituency	Periyakulam Parliamentary Constituency.
1952	73.38	75.32
1957	96.15	77.9
1962	83.7	95.9
1967	100	83.8
1971	96.78	79.8
1977	81.10	96.0
1980	85.8	98.6
1982	-	85.78
1984	99.11	97.20

Graph: 2

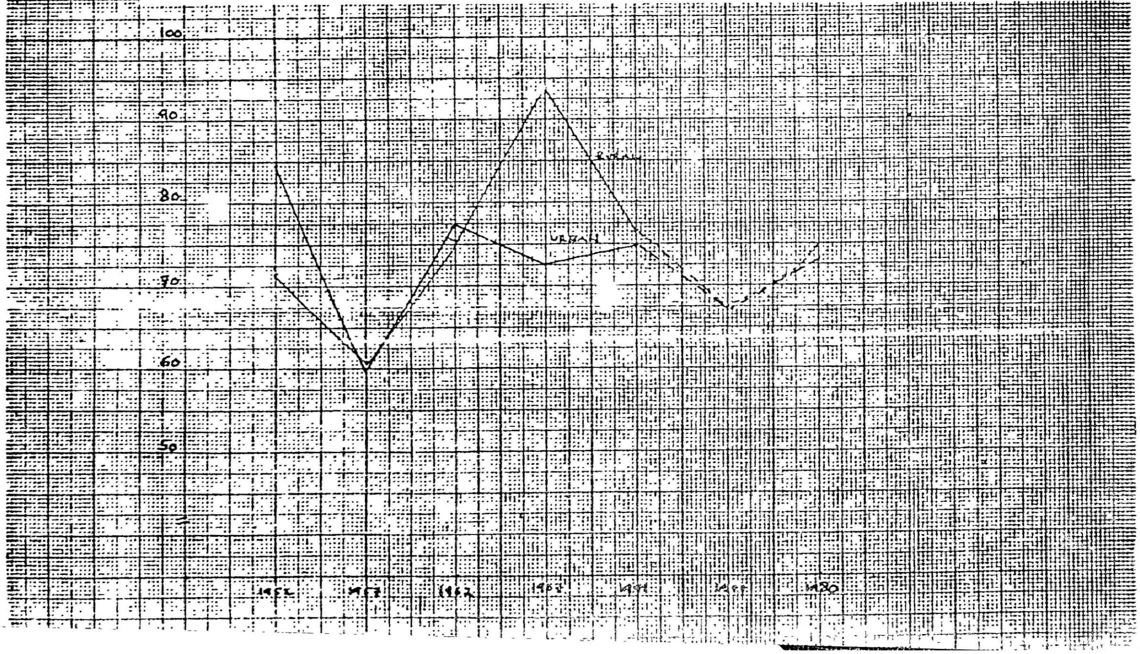
VOTER TURNOUT : ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, 1952-1980

MEN AND WOMEN



Graph: 3

VOTER TURNOUT :ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, 1952-80, RURAL AND URBAN



Thirdly, the age of the winning Assembly candidate has varied between about 43 and 37 years, the lower end of this range being set in 1967, the year of the DMK sweep. The youngest MLA that the Valley has sent to Madras was

AGE OF WINNING ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE

(Years)

Year	District average	Cumbum/Uthamapalayam Assembly Constituency
1952	41.4	60(Cumbum), 37(Uthamapalayam)
1957	42.6	40
1962	42.6	27
1967	37.6	32
1971	40.4	41
1977	39.4	30
1980	43.7	36
1984	-	36

M.Rajangam in 1962, when he was 27.

Fourthly, the level of formal education among the winning Assembly candidates has gone up. In 1957, of 20 successful candidates in the district, 5 had crossed SSLC; of them 2 had SSLCs and 3 had B.A. degrees. In 1980, of 22 successful candidates, 16 had qualified for the SSLC or more; of them 3 had SSLCs, 3 had degrees, another 7 had law degrees and another 3 MA/MSc degrees. The younger people, predictably, had higher levels of formal education; the average age of the 6 who had not got an SSLC in 1980 (All three CPI(M) MLAs, who had left school to join the freedom movement, were in this group) was 53 years, or almost 10 years above the average, and the oldest MLA in the district, M.G.Ramachandran (age recorded as 62 in 1980) had the lowest formal educational qualification (III standard).

Fifthly, as in the case with the State as a whole, the AIADMK and the DMK are the two leading political parties of the region. The Congress, which is the third party, has a mass influence that should not be underestimated -- among harijans, sections of the rural poor and women; among older people, who participated in or have memories of the freedom struggle and among those whose lives were transformed by the repeal of the infamous Criminal Tribes Act; among landlords, particularly those who were earlier with Kamaraj and the Syndicate Congress, and, more recently, among sections of youth. The support that it has is not, however, a consolidated support in organisational or electoral terms and does not manifest itself as an independent vote-gathering influence; on the contrary, the track record has shown that whenever the Congress has run alone in recent times, it has lost its deposit. (A significant section of voters who were interviewed for our survey, as we shall see, declared allegiance to the Congress. When its independent electoral strength was last tested at the Parliamentary by election of 1982, however, it got only 4573 votes in the Cumbum Assembly segment.) Despite its influence, then, it has been able to flourish only parasitically, in alliance with the DMK or AIADMK (and an AIADMK-Congress alliance is a winning combination). To get ahead, in electoral terms, it has had to travel piggyback.

THE ELECTIONS OF 1984

Let it be said once again: the elections of 1984 took place in extraordinary, near non-replicable circumstances. 1984 had been a year of political upsets of traumatic, cataclysmic events, of which the death of Mrs.Gandhi and the illness of MGR -- both of whose parties were now locked in electoral embrace -- were to make the greatest impact on the electorate.

On the day Mrs.Gandhi was killed, there was immediate reaction in the towns and villages of the Valley. In Gokilapuram, at the initiative of some of the big men and persons of different political parties in the village, a pandal was setup on the main road, near the corner where the bus stop is, and for three days there was public mourning and women doing oppari, grief-wailing, in relay and, at night, a taped version of their cries was played. In Uthamapalayam too, there was oppari, and in a Muslim area of town (Muslim women here do not appear on a platform on the street side) some of the wealthy and influential Muslims hired a group from a nearby village ("their oppari is very famous") to do oppari in their quarter of town. Some wealthy landowners set up their colour televisions on the public road so that people from the town and villages around could see the Doordarshan relay of Mrs.Gandhi's body lying in state and of the funeral.

S.Kandasami, landlord and former village panchayat president, who did a B.A. at Presidency College in the late 1960s and who is now one of the leaders of the DMK in Gokilapuram, described feelings in the village at her death: "Many of the poor and illiterate people in the village did not fully grasp what had happended. They knew that Indira Gandhi was the leader of the country and that she

had been shot dead, and it affected them greatly that she had been killed by her own bodyguards -- in their minds, this was treachery that could not even be thought of. It was as if there was some great confusion or turmoil in a place far away, and which did not augur well for people. When Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister, some of us may have thought 'How can this be politically correct?' but the common people just thought 'The mother has been killed, so now the son has come to her position, so let everything now be peaceful,' and this did not seem wrong ... And the television also played a big role -- people who went to Uthamapalayam actually saw the dead body on a colour television."

In the village, a condolence procession, the largest procession the village has ever had, was organised on the day of the funeral. It began from the pandal on the main street when the news of the departure of the funeral cortege from Teen Murti House came over the radio, it went through the village and to the river bank a little away from the village burning ghat, a public meeting was held and some people, from different parties and castes, had their heads shaved.

(This is an incident of that day. The leaders of the Congress(I) in the village, among them a prominent landlord, told some harijan people before the procession began that some people would have their heads shaven at the river bank after the procession, and if any of their caste wanted to do so, they could tell the harijan barber to bring his razor to the meeting-place. But the harijan barber had gone to nearby Chinnamanur and when the procession was over, there was no one to shave the harijans who volunteered for tonsure. The harijans protested that this was not a day on which such discrimination should be practised, and pressed their case

with the caste hindus. It was to no avail, however, and a group of harijans finally sought the anonymity of Uthamapalayam town to get their heads shaved.)

The sympathy factor -- inchoate, elemental -- certainly had a spontaneous basis; that spark was nurtured and fanned into flame by events and political people, and by the media, particularly Government-controlled television.

In addition, MGR was ill; the man whose popular image had been further boosted by a series of measures -- the Noon Meals Scheme, loans schemes and other social welfare schemes -- with which his name was initmately, often inseparably, associated, was in the United States, gravely ill.

In any case, before the campaign was really under way, the gap between the two contending electoral fronts -- the alliance led by the DMK (of the alliance, the DMK, CPI-M, CPI, TNKC and an independent stood in Madurai district) and the AIADMK-Congress (I) combine -- had widened considerably under the stress of the events of 1984. And as events were to show, this was an Assembly constituency where for the DMK, the personal prestige of a relatively strong candidate, campaign issues, campaign expenditure and widespread canvassing could not really bridge that gap.

The Major candidates

The major candidates for the Periyakulam parliament seat were P.Selvendran of the AIADMK and S.Agni Raju of the DMK, and for the Cumbum Assembly seat, M.Ramakrishnan of the DMK and S.Subburayar of the AIADMK. We have detailed interviews with the AIADMK candidate for Parliament and the DMK candidate for the Assembly, on their backgrounds, political experience, the stock question "what will you do for the constituency if elected", and on their perception of the political situation.

P.Selvendran, AIADMK candidate for Parliament

Selvendran sits on the cot in his little room at the Deluxe Lodge in Uthamapalayam, lungi-ed and shirtless, his unruly hair uncombed. There are three of his partymen and an college friend of his in the room, and the floor is littered with their slippers and the mud they have trailed in, and with cigarette butts and the leaves and string from the morning's breakfast parcels. Selvendran is a young man, 31 years old (b.June 5, 1953) and a bachelor, and his friends in the room are around his age, mainly younger. He is warm and friendly; on us, as on many others he has met, the immediate impact is that of a nice guy.

Selvendran is from a Kallar family of Gudalur town. His father, Perumal Thevar, is a medium landowner and document writer, a profession that Selvendran's brother has now taken to as well. Selvendran did high school at Gudalur and PUC and a B.A. in sociology at the Madura College, Madurai (1971-1975).

Political career: Selvendran's candidature and subsequent victory are the highest points in a political career that is not marked by great sacrifice or service to the people or struggle in people's movements.

As a young school boy, he participated in the anti-Hindi demonstrations in Gudalur: "We did not know much then, but we shouted slogans against Lal Bahadur Shastri" (There was police firing at Gudalur -- a schoolboy, Rajendran, and a tea shop owner, Shahul Hameed, died, a person had his leg broken and three police-men died, and people left their homes and lived in the dry lands removed from the village to avoid the police).

Selvendran joined the DMK student organisation in 1971 and, in his perception, his first major political act thereafter was this: "After Karunanidhi was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Annamalai University, a meeting to felicitate him was held at Madurai. I spoke at the meeting on behalf of the DMK wing of Madura College." He joined the AIADMK at the time of the split; "my conscience told me to follow MGR".

Selvendran became the ADMK organiser in Madura College, and in 1973, during demonstrations against the Karunanidhi government, he picketed the B-5 police station at Madurai and was removed and kept at B-4 till the evening -- an incident he refers to as "my jail experience." Since then, he has been in the AIADMK students' wing, the Madurai District Anna Tamil Ilakkiya Kazhagam (the party's Tamil literary front) and the MGR Youth Front. He became one among the young party speakers who were called to speak at meetings in different parts of Madurai district and the State. He has canvassed for his party at every election since 1977 and in 1982, at the Parliamentary by-election, asked for the ticket. His "revolutionary leader" called him and said "not now; this time you be the dummy candidate". When he asked for the ticket this time, he got it.

What will Selvendran do for the constituency if elected? First, he will demand a Madurai-Cochin national highway. Secondly, he states that Kannakikottam (the Mangaladevi temple) is actually in Tamil Nadu and that "there are enough historical records to prove that", and that the Centre should solve this "inter-State dispute". Thirdly, he has two demands that concern irrigation, one regarding the harnessing of rain-water channels from the western slopes and another for a new Periyar canal, from Lower Camp to Periyakulam, but he is not clear on the specifics of either proposal.

On national issues: "To the principle of a stable Centre, my support, and only the Congress(I) and Rajiv Gandhi can provide stability at the Centre;" on Centre-State relations, they should be like (and he smiles at the cleverness of it) "mother-daughter relations and not mother-in-law daughter-in-law relations."

On Sri Lanka, "the important thing is to solve the problem. We must begin by negotiating; the army must be sent in only as a last resort, not unless it is necessary. I believe that Rajiv Gandhi will make efforts to solve the problem." Selvendran said that he 'supported the foreign policy of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi —— their stand on relations towards socialist countries, nonalignment and problems of the Third World. I think that Rajiv Gandhi should follow their path —— there is no need for any new foreign policy."

He stresses that MGR will recover: "I am fully confident; there is no question of his not coming back to full activity." Selvendran is also confident that the AIADMK will form a government with its own majority, there will be no need for a coalition with the Congress (I).

The day after polling we are in Selvendran's house in Gudalur; it is not the house of a poor man, nor, particularly by Gudalur standards, is it the mansion of a wealthy man. A <u>pandal</u> has been erected in front of the house, the road is festooned with strings of AIADMK flags, the house is packed with visitors, relatives and campaigners, the young and the old. His father is gone to the fields —— he is quite unimpressed by the bustle of the past few weeks, Selvendran says. He speaks with warmth of his father and of his family and the people of his home town. As he walks through the roads, youth

and women gather around, wait for him and walk with him, treat him as one of them, and some have begun to petition him with their causes even before counting has begun.

In the car on our way back to Uthamapalayam Selvendran confesses, with a genuine and engaging modesty, that he is worried, nervous about being an M.P. -- about conducting himself in Delhi, about making speeches in the Lok Sabha. He is also worried, in the context of MGR's illness, about the political future, and although he pushes the problem away ("we will solve the problem if it arises, when it arises"), he wants to know if MGR can recover the mental faculties to be Chief Minister. The party will not have a basis for survival if MGR is not there, Selvendran says, and the fear of his coming back will keep the different factions from splitting at present, although he cannot say how long they will remain together. He expects the Centre to play a major role in the affairs of the AIADMK and its future -- "the course of Tamil Nadu's politics in the next six months can not be predicted."

N.Ramakrishnan, DMK candidate for the Assembly

N.Ramakrishnan, the late Cumbum Natarajan's brother, is having his first day off in many weeks. It is the day after voting, Christmas 1985, and there are three days to go before counting. There are people standing in small groups around his house, and a few, party leaders and close relatives, sit on sofas in the verandah. Ramakrishnan is also young, 35 years old, but his hair is a premature grey, and his deportment and behaviour more formal and identifiably candidate-like. We were at College together, however, and once he has taken us to another room and sat us down, the formality thaws somewhat; he stretches his tall body in any easy chair and talks of College and of how he never gets to play volleyball nowadays

(he was College captain) before talking about the current election. He has already given thought to the issues we are talking about, and his responses are ready.

Ramakrishnan did pre-university at the Haji Karutha Rowther College, Uthamapalayam, a B.A. in philosophy at the Pachaiyappa's College, Madras (1967-70) and an M.A. at the Madras Christian College, Tambaram (1971-73). He was married in 1975 and has a son and daughter.

His political influence and prestige is linked to the status of his family in the area and the fact that he is Natarajan's brother, to party influence and other factors; his political career has not involved sustained grass-roots activity on issues affecting the common people. He participated in the anti-Hindi processions of 1965-66 and in the election campaign for Rajangam in 1967. As a student in Madras, he was not politically active. He campaigned for his brother in 1977 and 1980, and after 1980 has been "completely immersed in politics," giving up tasks of agricultural supervision altogether. As we have seen, although he was defeated at the Parliamentary by-election in 1982, he had the lead in the Cumbum Assembly segment, and "since my defeat, I have been very active."

"What kind of activity?"

"I took part in the agitation on farmers' demands in 1983; I go to the house of any person who calls me for a wedding or funeral; I have given donations to ISCUS and taken part in felicitations organised by them to people who have gone to the Soviet Union; I have helped collect money for Sri Lankan Tamils".

Ramakrishnan said that he expected to win by 2000 to 5000 votes, and the reasons for the lead he expected were the DMK's party base, his brother's name and family influence, the influence of the Muslim vote and concentrations of voters of his own Vokkaliga caste. He expected clear margins in his favour at Cumbum, Uthamapalayam and Gudalur towns and K.K.Patti and Surulipatti villages -- "I will do well in towns and advanced villages; where there is illiteracy and backwardness, I cannot expect to do as well as the AIADMK candidate".

Ramakrishnan reflects on why people vote AIADMK: there is MGR's "glamour" and the fact that he is ill. "They are also able to take advantage of the bad harvests and (consequent) hardships of the last phase of Kalaignar's rule and the propaganda that if the DMK rules, you will have to eat tapioca and maize flour had some effect."

Immediately after this, he asserts: "But now people are more and more dissatisfied with the Anna DMK; many families have suffered because of this arrack empire."

'But," he switches again, "the noon meals scheme has helped their image, as have the loans that have been distributed in recent times."

I ask Ramakrishnan what, in his perception, motivates those who vote DMK, and he replies: "First, DMK bhakti, party loyalty and loyalty to Kalaignar. Next, some people got house sites when Kalaignar was C.M., and thirdly, DMK leaders, particularly Kalaignar, always speak about the poor, the backward and harijans in their speeches."

What will he do for the people of the constituency if elected? He says that he will work to have roads constructed,

drinking water facilities provided, for electricity and water facilities in harijan colonies and for the distribution of house site pattas to harijans. But these are general demands, and he does not get down to specifics (link roads between which villages? drinking water facilities in which quarter of which village?) He also wants coconut-based agro-industries (he is conscious of the need to cope with the shift in cropping pattern towards coconut) and says that he will work for "perfect marketing facilities for agricultural produce." There is a new idea: Ramakrishnan is keen that the government appoint separate agricultural extension officers for garden cultivation in the Valley.

While routinely stating that he expected his party to win a majority in the Assembly, Ramakrishnan had given serious thought to what would happen if it did not. His premise was that MGR could not come back, and that his recovery was being greatly exaggerated. There were two possibilities -- either the Congress would take advantage of the situation, with AIADMK MLAs joining the Congress ("the whole present election alliance and strategy is a conspiracy to let the Congress back into Tamil Nadu"), or, if the margin between the fronts were close, many would come to the DMK and Kalaignar would form the Government. "In any case, after the elections, the AIADMK will not survive: politics in Tamil Nadu will be between the DMK and the Congress."

Such are the perils of political prediction.

The two other major candidates: S.Agni Raju of the DMK, Selvendran's main opponent, is a considerably older person, 53 years old. He had won the Assembly election on a DMK ticket from Thirupparankundram in the famous election of 1967. He is not from the Cumbum-Periyakulam area nor from a caste that is numerous in the constituency.

S.Subburayar (b.1948), the victorious AIADMK candidate for the Assembly, is Ramakrishnan's cousin and is also from a landlord cum cardamom plantation owning family of Cumbum. He did a B.Sc. at Uthamapalayam and got a degree in law at the Madras Law College. He practised law at the High Court at Madras from 1977 to 1980 and later at the Munsiff and Sub-Magistrate courts at Uthamapalayam. He was also General Secretary of the Cumbum Cardamom Growers' Union.

Independents

There were 6 independent candidates at the parliamentary election and 7 at the Assembly election (including a candidate of Mr.S.D.Somasundaram's Namathu Kazhagam at the Assembly poll). In this constituency and this election none of them, of course, expected to win, or even to marginally split the vote. For some of them standing was just a gag; some saw the printing of their names on the ballot paper as fleeting access, if not to the mainstream, to at least a footnote in history; for most, however, there was a clear material incentive as well for candidature. Each candidate is allowed agents at each polling booth and at each table in the counting room. Candidates who are actually in the race, supported by one of the main fronts, want as many polling and counting agents as they can get, and they are willing to hand something over to an independent for taking over his right to appoint polling and counting agents. For an independent who is the eventual winner of, say 77 votes (a figure unlikely to have been too much higher even if his own polling and counting agents had monitored the poll), allowing another to appoint agents in his place is sound economic policy: consideration minus deposit money is at least Rs.1750.

The Campaign

From before dawn, when it is still dark and the December mist still lies layered on the fields and groves, and the towns and villages of the Valley, activity begins; the miners and sappers of the campaign -- their bodies wrapped in bed-covers with towel-cloths around their heads and fingers and palms wrapped around glasses of tea -- are awake and bringing in the new day. Radiators are filled and the dust and mud of yesterday wiped off cars and jeeps; drivers and mechanics armed with flashlights disappear, waist-upwards, beneath the bonnets of their vehicles. Sound-operators sort records and tape-cassettes, and the siren-like whines of microphones, amplifiers and loud-speakers being tested collide with the rasping of four-wheeler engines being rewed up, clearing their throats for the day of campaigning ahead. In the village, people asleep in the campaign pandals are waking/woken up, the floors cleared of yersterday's litter and beedi and cigarette butts, and women will soon be in to sweep the ground and sprinkle water on the ground around.

Soon the sun is up and picking the mist off the Valley floor, and lighting up thousands of suns, each emerging from between two hills, and as many pairs of leaves -- painted, tarred, plastered and postered on every wall and on culverts and bridges and on road surfaces throughout the area. "If there is an election campaign on in Tamil Nadu, it should be seen in Cumbum, "says the daily Malai Murasu, published from Madurai. Throughout the constituency, there are strings of party flags, posters and paintings, party symbols drawn in strings of coloured light bulbs and lanterns made of paper and wood and painted with candidate's names and symbols and fitted with electric light bulbs. From the pro-MGR loud speakers there are taped speeches and film songs, from MGR

and Sivaji films, and people particularly stop to listen to the songs from the films of the early 60's, with lilting tunes and the evocative rural, peasant-and-labour lyrics of Pattukottai Kalyanasundaram; from the DMK loudspeaker, apart from party songs there are the speeches of Mr.Karunanidhi, to the roll and cadence of whose alliterative Tamil even a person who has stopped voting for him many elections ago may stop to listen. Campaign jeeps and vans and Ambassadors now churn the dust of every motorable road in the Valley, carrying candidates and their supporters between town and village, with loudspeakers heralding their arrival and amplifying their cause.

In Gokilapuram, each of the two fronts has erected a pandal, its walls and roof of thatch. On a normal day, the DMK pandal is full of people, men, who talk about the day's canvassing, read to each other from the day's newspapers and talk about the election situation in Tamil Nadu and other parts of India. They know that the AIADMK leads in Gokilapuram, but the presence of people from Madras reminds them of a happier constituency -- the people of Madras, they are confident, will not swoon before the film star. And the story is passed around once again, to collective mirth, of when Kalaignar introduced Era.Chezhiyan at a public meeting in Mylapore and he began by saying that this was his friend Era.Chezhiyan: "he cannot sing, he cannot dance, he cannot act, but he will make a good M.P."

By contrast, the AIADMK pandal has less people in it, it is generally quiet with a few people inside asleep at times, but the one thing that people there are sure of is that the village will vote with the AIADMK.

The DMK has a discernible party organisation, more so in the towns, and one that is particularly apparent at election time. Groups of persons come to campaign offices, they are allotted work, some set aside time for door-to-door canvassing. Their public meetings are announced and conducted with fanfare (although it was a subdued Mr.Karunanidhi who visited the constituency this time), and in this election, their canvassing efforts were helped along in pockets where was support from the left -- particularly the CPI(M) -- whose cadre formed knots of conscientious canvassers, going from door to door and speaking at street corners, raising and arguing political issues. The AIADMK, on the other hand, has a much more amorphous party organisation, and despite a consolidation of its popular influence, it is still far from being a cadre-based party. It also, of course, had cars and jeeps and vans and held public meetings (Jayalalitha was here, as were Mr.Thirunavukkarasu and Mr.Kalimuthu) and smaller street-corner speeches, and, greatly aided by the wave that was working in their favour and carrying them along, held their own in the campaign.

DMK canvassers spoke of AIADMK misrule; of the "arrack empire", the renewed public sale of arrack as a result of which, they said, the few had got rich and the many had their savings wasted and families destroyed; they spoke of rising prices, deteriorating standards of living among the poor, and of corruption run amuck; and, they asked, was not N.Ramakrishnan Cumbum Natarajan's brother and a better candidate, do all of you not know him better? But in the special circumstances of December 1984, they did not catch the people's ear, and it was the counter-propaganda that manifestly drew the greater response: Our MGR gave your children food, distributed sarees and dhotis and brought you drinking water -- what did Karunanidhi do? It was MGR who gave you bank loans

(in Theni, we heard campaign propaganda from a jeep that went like this: "who is the person who gave you loans — MGR! Who is the person who cancelled their repayment — also our MGR!) Corruption was greater under Karunanidhi and prices, particularly of rice, rose more steeply.

During the campaign, it was their propaganda that appeared to have greater currency in Gokilapuram. We have seen group canvassers of the DMK alliance going to harijan agricultural labourer households in the village and turning away, stung by reminders of Mr.Karunanidhi's record of rule. "It is Kalaignar's misfortune", says K.Ramasami, harijan agricultural labourer, DMK supporter and labour contractor at transplanting and harvest time, "that the last few years of his government had bad harvests, and the people suffered".

Another visible feature of the campaign was that unlike the AIADMK and Congress (which had, in particular, MGR and Mrs.Gandhi) the DMK was not able to make any independent appeal to women voters.

The main plank of the AIADMK-Congress campaign, however, was the sustained and unabashed use of the sympathy factor; every vein of compassion and sympathy and gratitude that exists among our people was ruthlessly mined for conversion into the sympathy vote. Pictures and paintings of Mrs.Gandhi were in all parts of the constituency — of her alive, of her dead body, of her with blood spattered on her body, and of the extract from the "every last drop of blood" speech. For their part, AIADMK canvassers said that the people should vote for MGR and make him happy and thus help him recover.

Five days before polling, the video recording of MGR at Downstate Medical Centre was played in different parts of Uthamapalayam: At a street-corner at 10 p.m., the van carrying the video equipment stops and it is set up. After a few slogans are shouted, the video tape begins and by that time a few hundred people, mainly agricultural labourers and casual workers of the town, have gathered to watch. There are V-signs and cheers -- and, particularly from the women, tears -- as MGR manages to hold a spoon and, peering peering though thick-lensed, undarkened glasses, to present the audience with a sick man's twisted smile. By the time the equipment is put away and the van is ready to leave, there is little doubt about whom many of the voters will vote for.

As election day came close, even the most wide-eyed DMK supporter had no doubt that Selvendran would be the next member of parliament. The Assembly election, however, appeared to be less one-sided: Subburayar was fighting his first election and was known more by his party and symbol than as an individual, while Ramakrishnan was better known and had even won a lead in the Cumbum Assembly segment in the Periyakulam by-election of 1982. DMK canvassers began to pay less and less attention to the parliamentary election, concentrating on Ramakrishnan, presenting him as the more credible, convincing candidate and personality and saying that in the State there was a viable opposition alternative -- theirs -- to AIADMK rule, contrasting the situation with that at the Centre. Eventually, although Ramakrishnan lost, he did not (considering the margins of victory that were established in other parts of the district) receive a drubbing.

Campaign expenditure

We learned that for the Assembly campaign, the amount that a major candidate spent on his own was over Rs.300,000. In a place like Cumbum, where two wealthy candidates were opposing each other, there was some competitive expenditure that pushed individual expenses up. The largest part of this was the expenditure on posters and other printed propaganda material and on vehicles (each candidate had paid, from his own funds, to put 30 vehicles or more on the road). There were also:

-- Expenses at the time of filing nominations; there is a procession, and people are invited to eat.

-- Camapign funds to local units: each village and town unit is given money to conduct the campaign in their own locality, paint the walls and distribute pamphlets and so on. Every morning money is sent to the unit (the amount varies with the size of the electorate) and by the end of the campaign, about Rs.25000 would have been sent to the Cumbum unit and Rs.4000 to Gokilapuram (in Gokilapuram in this case, no funds were collected locally by the party at this election) and even a small village would have received Rs.2000.

-- Booth expenses and expenses on counting agents: they are paid a certain amount for the day and on counting day, food is also sent to the candidate's agents.

-- Payments to independent candidates who are willing to allow a major candidate to use their quotas of polling agents and counting agents.

An election campaign does not <u>have</u> to be expensive, however. Selvendran could spend less even though he was contesting from a parliamentary constituency. In every Assembly segment, the Assembly candidate printed posters that not only advertised his own names, but which said

"Vote (name of Assembly candidate) for the Assembly and P.Selvendran for Parliament." The people of Selvendran's caste are spread over every segment of the constituency, and it was to the Assembly candidate's advantage to advertise Selvendran as a running mate. (In Theni, Selvendran told us, there was a group of villages whose Kallar majority was angry with the sitting AIADMK MLA, V.R.Jayaraman, and he was permitted to enter the villages only in the company of Selvendran, who mollified the voters and "persuaded them to vote for the AIADMK". In such circumstances, "the Assembly candidate would naturally want to put my name on his poster".)

In the event, Selvendran had to spend money on the single Ambassador car that he used, on room rent at the lodge in Uthamapalayam, on booth and counting day expenses and, on occasion, on food for himself and the campaign colleagues who were with him. By his own account, Selvendran did not spend more than Rs.60,000 to Rs.75,000 (a figure that was generally corroborated even by persons on the other side) and this was more than made up by a collection that had been taken at the beginning of the campaign. The no-lose candidate was a low-spend candidate as well.

SURVEY OF VOTERS

Here are the results of a survey of voters conducted in Gokilapuram from December 16 to 22, the last seven days of the campaign. The objective of the survey was to study voting preferences, political attitudes and opinions on some all-India issues among different sections of the population of a village in which, over the past seven years and a half, we have been involved in social sciences research, and for which we have the results of a census-type survey of households.

This survey was a questionnaire-based, sample survey; our Gokilapuram sample had 502 respondents from a voter population of 2642, a 19 percent sample. To select the sample, we used the occupational distribution of the population as the basic parameter for stratification, while also adjusting the sample to make it separately and approximately representative of the age and caste distribution of the population. (The number of women per thousand men in our sample, 673, diverge from that of the population for age groups above 20 years which was 951. We have, however, given results separately for men and women. Further, although the sample size is large 19 percent, there are individual cells in tables that have too few entries to be counted as really representative.)

Survey results

With regard to voters' choice of candidate, our results were within a single percentage point of the percentage of valid votes polled by the winning AIADMK candidates at the booths in Gokilapuram village. The divergence of the survey results from the actuals in the case of the DMK parliament and assembly candidates was about five percent in each case; this was probably due to some inaccuracies in sampling and also due to the possibility that in the context of wave in the other direction, some DMK voters stated that they were undecided.

A major factor in the relatively close correspondence between the survey results and the actual results is the sample size itself, nearly one-fifth; in the event, it gives us a measure of confidence in presenting the disaggregated results.

We first classified voters by occupation, age, caste, as literates and illiterates and by educational status, and looked at their choice of candidate for parliament and the Assembly, separately for men and women.

The first and major feature of these tables is that a significant majority of just about every section of the voting population, disaggregate it by what you will -- occupation, age, sex, caste, educational level -- voted for the AIADMK. The larger picture, then, is one where nuances are obscured -- this is particularly true of the parliamentary election. Within this, however, there are some discernible sub-tendencies, muted though they were by the overall wave.

While men and women voted close to each other in the village, women tended to be more consistent in voting for the same party for parliament and the Assembly (this is a point we shall return to in the discussion of booth-wise results for the constituency). This takes us to another feature of the tables: a section of the voters clearly preferred the AIADMK-Congress alliance at the Centre and Ramakrishnan of the DMK at the State. A simple way of measuring the proportion of people who did so is to take the difference between the votes polled by Ramakrishnan and by Agni Raju as a percent of all the votes polled. For the village, about 6 percent of the voters voted for Selvendran at the parliamentary poll and Ramakrishnan of the DMK at the Assembly poll (the

final figure, 5.66 percent, was very close to the survey result of 5.58 percent); men voters, among whom the corresponding figure was 7.33 percent, were more discriminating in this respect than women voters.

Occupational groups

The occupational groups that voted most solidly with the AIADMK for the Assembly and parliament were agricultural labourers, the poorer sections of the peasantry and artisans and persons working at traditional caste callings. The vote for Selvendran was a general one among occupational groups. Among these groups, the 'vote-switchers', those who voted for the AIADMK-Congress at the Centre and the DMK candidate to the Assembly, were particularly high among landlords (25 percent) and among persons engaged in business activity other than agriculture (11 percent); but as a proportion of the total population they were, of course, too small in number to make any decisive difference.

Voter preference in Gokilapuram, Assembly Poll, By occupational Groups

Occupational Group	Men DMK	Men AIADMK	Men Others	Men Total	Women DMK	Women AIADMK	Women Others	Women Total	All voters DMK	All voters AIADMK	All voters Others	All voters Total
Agricultural Labourers	28	78	4	110	24	95	8	127	52	173	12	237
	25.5	70.9	3.6	100	12.7	74.2	6.3	100	4.9	73.0	15.1	100
Peasants who do not labour out	9	8	2	19	2	3	1	6	11	11	3	25
	47.4	42.1	10.5	100	33.3	50.0	14.7	100	44.0	44.0	12.0	100
Peasants who labour out	4	29	3	36	6	7		13	10	36	3	49
	11.1	80.6	8.3	100	46.2	53.8		100	20.4	73.5	6.1	100
Major landlords	5	4		9		1		1	5	5		10
	55.6	44.4		100		100		100	50.0	50.0		100
Medium landlords	4	3		7	2	1		3	6	4		10
	57.1	42.9		100	66.7	33.3		100	60.0	40.0		100
Artisans, Traditional caste calling	1	20	4	24	2	4		6	3	24	4	31
	4.0	80.0	16.0	100	33.3	66.7		100	9.7	77.4	12.9	100
Salaried persons Professionals	5	9	2	16	7	6	2	15	12	15	4	31
	31.3	56.3	12.5	100	46.7	40.0	13.3	100	38.7	48.4	12.9	100
Business activity other than agriculture	28	28	3	59	10	10	2	22	38	38	5	81
	47.5	47.5	5.1	100	46.5	45.4	9.1	100	46.9	46.9	6.2	100
Non-agricultural labour	3	10	5	18	5	2		7	8	12	5	25
	16.7	55.6	27.8	100	72.1	28.6		100	32.0	48.0	20.0	100
Others		1		1	1	1		2	1	2		3
		100.0		100	50.0	50.0		100	33.3	66.7		100
To All Respondents	87	190	23	300	59	130	13	202	146	320	36	502
	29.0	63.3	7.7	100	29.3	64.4	6.4	100	29.1	63.7	7.2	100

Voter Preference in Gokilapuram Parliamentary Poll, By occupational Groups (figure in red are percentages)

Occupational Group	MEN DMK	MEN AIADMK	MEN Others	MEN Total	WOMEN DMK	WOMEN AIADMK	WOMEN Others	WOMEN Total	ALL VOTERS DMK	ALL VOTERS AIADMK	ALL VOTERS Others	ALL VOTERS Total
Agricultural labourers	25 22.7	81 73.6	4 3.6	110 100	24 13.9	95 74.8	8 6.3	127 100	49 20.7	176 74.3	12 5.1	237 100
Peasants who do not labour out	6 31.6	11 57.9	2 10.5	19 100	1 16.7	5 83.3		6 100	7 28.0	16 64.0	2 8.0	25 100
Peasants who labour out	2 5.5	31 86.1	3 8.3	36 100	5 38.5	8 61.5		13 100	7 14.3	39 79.6	3 6.1	49 100
Major landlords	2 22.2	7 77.8		9 100		1 100		1 100	2 20.0	8 80.0		10 100
Medium landlords	2 28.6	5 71.4		7 100	2 66.7	1 33.3		3 100	4 40.0	6 60.0		10 100
Artisans, Traditional caste calling	1 4.0	20 80.0	4 16.0	25 100	2 33.3	4 66.7		6 100	3 9.7	24 77.4	4 12.9	31 100
Salaried persons Professionals	4 25.0	10 62.5	2 12.5	16 100	6 40.0	7 46.7	2 13.3	15 100	10 32.3	17 54.8	4 12.9	31 100
Business Activity other than Agriculture	21 35.6	35 59.3	3 5.1	59 100	8 36.4	12 54.5	2 9.1	22 100	29 35.8	47 58.0	5 6.2	81 100
Non-agricultural manual labour	2 11.1	11 61.1	5 27.8	18 100	5 71.4	2 28.6		7 100	7 28.0	13 52.0	5 20.0	25 100
Others		1 100		1 100		2 100		2 100		3 100		3 100
All Respondents	65 21.7	212 70.7	23 7.7	300 100	53 26.2	137 67.8	12 5.9	202 100	118 23.5	349 69.5	35 7.0	502 100

Age groups

Among different age groups, a majority in each individual age-group voted with the AIADMK Congress alliance. The trend is particularly marked (76 per cent in the parliamentary and 70 percent in the Assembly latest) among persons over 50 (and for Selvendran, among first-time voters in the 20 to 24 age group as well): there is MGR's image of one who is concerned for the old, and the pattern probably also reflects old loyalties to the Congress.

Caste-groups

If the AIADMK-Congress alliance was able at this election to cut across age and class barriers, it also received a majority of votes in each caste-group. Persons of the scheduled castes voted strongly for the AIADMK Congress alliance in the parliamentary (76.8 percent) and Assembly (74.4 percent) polls, as did the major artisan and service castes. A majority of the other most numerous major castes also voted for the alliance, although more so for Selvendran than for his Assembly running mate.

Educational levels

The AIADMK Congress alliance received a higher proportion of the votes of illiterate persons and literate; the gap between the fronts is higher among illiterate persons.

While Selvendran's candidature received support from the majority of persons of every different level of education, Ramakrishnan had the edge over his rival in terms of support among persons with a higher education (Pre-university and above).

Parliament: 65% of literate and 75% of illiterate.
Assembly: 56.9% of literate and 71.9% of illiterate.

The overall picture is of a sweep by the candidate of the AIADMK-Congress alliance at the parliamentary election, one that cut across differences in occupation, age, caste and educational levels, with a credible DMK candidate being able, in the face of the wave, to attract away a portion of the vote at the Assembly poll, although not nearly enough to alter the verdict.

Voters' choices: the reasons

Two sets of questions elicited responses that were particularly likely to have been influenced by the events of the day: those relating to the reasons for voters' choices and to respondents' perceptions of the current socioeconomic situation and its impact on the lives of their households.

After our initial question about whom the respondent would vote for, we asked "What is the reason for your choice"; we did not present the respondent with a set of alternatives or offer suggestions or in any way prompt a response - we just took down whatever he/she said (many persons gave more than a single reason) and later coded the stated reasons. Percentages in the table represent the number of times a reason was stated as a percent of the total number of reasons cited, reasons not being mutually exclusive.

REASONS FOR CHOICE: DMK VOTERS

(IN PERCENT)

Reason		Percent Men	Women	Persons
Loyalty to DMK, to Karunanidhi	-	34.0	35.59	34.59
Good candidate	-	31.0	10.17	23.27
AIADMK misrule	-	18.0	27.12	21.38
Party of the poor	-	2.0	0	1.26
My husband's/father's party	-	2.0	15.25	6.92
Other reasons/no reasons	-	13.0	11.86	12.58
Total	-	100.0	100.0	100.0

For DMK voters, loyalty to the party and Mr.Karunanidhi (a small proportion of this group called the DMK the party which "protects Tamil language and culture"), together with the competence of the candidate and AIADMK misrule" make up almost 80 percent of the reasons stated by all DMK voters (72.88 percent of those stated by the women and 83 percent of those stated by men).

REASONS FOR CHOICE: AIADMK VOTERS

(in percent)

Reason		Percent		
		Men	Women	Persons
Noon meals scheme	-	16.61	19.15	17.61
"They provide loans"	-	21.11	13.83	18.24
Other social welfare schemes, development schemes at village level	-	10.73	17.55	13.42
"Party of the poor", "Party of the harijans"	-	3.11	5.32	3.98
Other perceived benefits from AIADMK rule	-	12.46	9.04	11.11
Loyalty to AIADMK, MGR	-	11.07	7.98	9.85
Loyalty to Congress(I), Mrs.Gandhi	-	17.65	9.57	14.47
Sympathy: MGR	-	-	1.06	0.42
Sympathy: Mrs.Gandhi	-	0.35	1.60	0.84
Good candidate	-	1.04	-	0.63
Need for stable central government	-	0.69	-	0.42
My husband's/father's party	-	0.69	7.98	3.56
No reason/other reasons	-	4.50	6.91	5.45
Total	-	100.00	100.00	100.00

The reasons for voting AIADMK were different. Now, hardly any person said "I am voting for the AIADMK because of sympathy for MGR/Mrs.Gandhi" -- this would have appeared too unthinking; the sympathy expressed itself in an expression of loyalty to MGR and Mrs.Gandhi and to an appreciation of MGR's rule. The reasons for voting AIADMK reflect the fact that it is a party in power, one during whose tenure a number of village-level social welfare and anti-poverty schemes (some of which have a distinct populist aspect to them) have been implemented. Among the reasons stated for voting MGR, the noon meals scheme, loans (mainly under IRDP), other social welfare schemes (distribution of sarees and dhotis to agricultural labourers last year, for instance) and rural development schemes (drinking water facilities, repairs to link roads), other perceived benefits from AIADMK rule and the perception that it is a party of the poor and harijans made up about 64 percent; if party loyalty is added, then the proportion is over three-quarters. Two others features of the table are the fact that loyalty to the Congress is significant (14.47 percent of reasons cited by all voters) and secondly, that the competence of the candidate himself hardly weighed with AIADMK voters, who were voting for the party and not for the candidate.

Opinions on current socioeconomic situation:

Opinions regarding the current situation were consistent with the reasons that voters gave for their choices. DMK voters, particularly men, were attacking, putting down the performance of the government and also conscious of the possibility of using an opinion poll as propaganda against the government --- and often embellishing replies (the respondents were presented with mutually exclusive alternatives) with fiery adjectives against AIADMK and, to a lesser extent, the Congress. AIADMK voters, on the other hand, were in general more generous women tended to moderate men's opinions, with

AIADMK women less efflusive than the men about trends in price levels and standards of living and DMK women slightly less harsh than the men about a worsening situation.

With regard to the standard of living of their own household over the past five years, a higher percentage of DMK voters than AIADMK saw a worsening of the situation and a higher percentage of AIADMK than the DMK saw an improvement. On both sides, however, a major section saw their situation as having remained the same -- in general, fewer women thought that the situation had improved, and more thought it had worsened.

Standard of living over the past five years
(in percent)

Response	Men	Women	All Respondents
Improved	36.0	22.8	30.7
Remained the same	44.3	55.0	48.6
Worsened	19.7	21.8	20.5
Undecided	-	0.5	0.2
All Respondents	100.0	100.0	100.0

On the price level over the past two years, aggregates indicate that more people thought it was "not at all within control" than anything else. The aggregate is, however, highly affected by the DMK voters' opinions -- 80.5 percent of the men and 62.7 percent of the women said that it was out of control. Among AIADMK voters the largest single section thought that the price level had been somewhat within control, although a higher proportion of women than men thought that it was out of control.

Price Level over the past two years

(in per cent)

Response	Men	Women	All Respondents
Very much within control	14.7	16.3	15.3
Somewhat within control	36.7	34.2	35.7
Not at all within control	47.0	46.0	46.6
Undecided	1.7	3.5	2.4

Level of corruption over the past five years

(in percent)

Response	Men	Women	All Respondents
Increased	42.0	13.4	30.5
Decreased	19.3	10.4	15.7
Remained the same	14.7	3.5	10.2
Can't say/Don't know	24.0	72.8	43.6
All Respondents	100.0	100.0	100.0

Access to political information

Three sets of questions dealt with the level of political information of the voter -- the first with the name of the candidate for whom he/she was voting, the second with national-level political issues and the third with political personalities. There are two striking and sustained features of our results: first, women are far less informed than men, so much so that aggregates of all voters make little sense, since they tend to conceal significantly divergent trends among men and women. Secondly, DMK voters are distinctly better informed than AIADMK (although the gap here is not as wide as between men and women).

Candidate identity

While it is legitimate to expect that people vote for credible, recognised parties, the extent of ignorance, especially among women voters, of even the names of the persons they are voting for is extraordinary. For the majority of women voters what sets apart their candidate is not his name -- and much less his individual competence -- but the symbol against his name on the ballot paper.

With regard to the Assembly candidate, while the gap between men and women still remains wide, DMK voters were

far more familiar with Ramakrishnan's name than with Agni Raju's. Among AIADMK voters, the proportion that did not know Selvendran's name is roughly similar to that which did not know Subbarayar's -- a little over 30 percent of the men and about 81 percent of the women.

People's access to national-level political information

The major feature of the responses to our questions on national political issues was that for a large section of the voting population, the names of leaders of many political parties, the events in Andhra Pradesh and the army action in Punjab are distant thunder, sounds that many in the village have never heard.

The events in Punjab

We set minimal requirements in tabulating responses to the question "what was the army action in Punjab?" 'Partial information' means that the respondent had heard that the army entered the Golden Temple; 'sufficient information' only means that they also had some idea of why the army entered the Temple -- "extremism", "some people wanted a separate country" -- and stated at least one such item of information. Even with this very liberal test, 79 percent of our respondents did not know about the army action in Punjab; among women, the figure was 93.6 percent, and among men 70 percent. Of those who had some information on Punjab, most thought the army action justified -- those who did not were not in sympathy with armed terrorism, but said that Mrs.Gandhi could have settled it earlier and by other means.

What is the name of the parliament candidate you are voting for: (in percent)

Response	Men: Voting for the DMK	Men: Voting for the AIADMK	Men: Total	Women: Voting for the DMK	Women: Voting for the AIADMK	Women: Total	All Voters: Voting for the DMK	All Voters: Voting for the AIADMK	Total
Name known	85.9	68.4	72.5	25.0	18.8	20.6	58.6	49.6	51.9
Name unknown	14.1	31.6	27.5	75.0	81.3	79.4	41.4	50.4	48.1
All respondents	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

What is the name of the Assembly candidate you are voting for: (in percent)

Response	Men: Voting for the DMK	Men: Voting for the AIADMK	Men: Total	Women: Voting for the DMK	Women: Voting for the AIADMK	Women: Total	All Voters: Voting for the DMK	All Voters: Voting for the AIADMK	Total
Name known	94.2	68.9	77.6	46.6	19.0	28.3	75.0	49.8	58.0
Name unknown	5.8	30.1	22.4	53.4	81.0	71.7	25.0	50.2	42.0
All respondents	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Was the Army action in Punjab justified?

(in percent)

Response	Men	Women	All Respondents
Justified	31.0	8.9	22.1
Not justified	3.3	..	2.0
Can't say/Don't know	65.7	91.1	75.9
All Respondents	100.0	100.0	100.0

What was the Army action in Punjab?

(in percent)

Response	Men	Women	All Respondents
No information/ wrong information	69.0	93.6	78.9
Partial information	15.0	5.4	11.2
Sufficient information	16.0	1.0	10.0
All Respondents	100	100	100

NTR Ministry dismissal

Again, a very high proportion of respondents, 67.7 per cent, did not know of the dismissal of the NTR Ministry earlier in the year; of those who did, the majority considered it unjustified.

Dismissal of the NTR Ministry

(in percent)

Response	Men	Women	All Respondents
Justified	6.7	1.0	4.4
Unjustified	42.3	6.4	27.9
Can't say/Don't know	51.0	92.6	67.7
All Respondents	100	100	100

Political personalities

We asked voters to identify six persons -- Rajiv Gandhi, Charan Singh, A.B.Vajpayee, Chandra Sekhar, N.T.Rama Rao and Jyoti Basu. We read out the name of the person and first asked who he was and secondly the position he occupied.

Rajiv Gandhi was by far the most widely heard of, although he was, firstly, not known at all by 18 percent of respondents and, secondly, was in general better known as his mother's son than as Prime Minister, particularly among women, among whom less than 10 percent identified him as Prime Minister (many would not relate to the term 'Prime Minister' at all).

Rajiv Gandhi: Identity

(in percent)

Response	Men	Women	All Respondents
No information/ wrong information	11.7	27.2	17.9
Partial information ("Indira Gandhi's son", "Amma's son" etc.)	34.3	62.9	45.8
Sufficient information ("Prime Minister")	54.0	9.9	36.3
All Respondents	100	100	100

In the case of Charan Singh, the name "Singh" tempted many people, particularly men, to take a few shots at guessing who he could be ("a Sikh", "an army commander", and, more frequently, "the President of India"), but in fact he was unknown to the vast majority. He was remembered by a small minority for the brief period that he warmed the Prime Ministerial chair, although very few (15 men) knew the present name of his party. Among women, he was unknown to all but 3, and none had heard of the DMKP.

Charan Singh: Identity

(in percent)

Response	Men	Women	All Respondents
No information/ wrong information	81.3	98.5	88.2
Partial information ("Former P.M."; Formerly Lok Dal"; etc.)	13.7	1.5	8.8
Sufficient information (DMKP Leader)	5.0		3.0
All Respondents	100.0	100.0	100.0

Mr.Vajpayee was even less known -- for many persons the name we read out was just a sound, and people have asked me to repeat myself and then asked me to clarify what that meant, was it the name of a person or what?

Mr.Rama Rao is known and identified by a much larger section than all the others save, of course, Rajiv Gandhi, to whom he is a distant second.

Chandra Shekhar was better known than his erstwhile Janata colleagues; he also has the distinct advantage of retaining the Janata Party label. (A few persons identified 'Chandra Shekhar' as the former Cumbum MLA.)

Jyoti Basu was third, after Mr.Rama Rao, although again far behind.

Six Political Leaders: Identity

(in Percent)

Name	Some Information			No Information/Wrong Information		
	Men	Women	Persons	Men	Women	Persons
Rajiv Gandhi	88.3	72.8	83.7	11.7	27.2	1
N.T.Rama Rao	56.4	14.3	39.5	43.7	85.6	6
Jyoti Basu	28.0	3.0	18.0	72.0	97.0	8
Chandra Shekhar	28.0	2.0	17.5	72.0	98.0	8
Charan Singh	18.7	1.5	11.8	81.3	98.5	8
A.B.Vajpayee	10.0	0.5	6.2	90.0	99.5	9

Agricultural labourer's unions

The issue that most closed the gap between AIADMK voters and DMK is their common perception that unions of agricultural labourers are necessary, although here as elsewhere, there are still wide divergences in the opinions of men and women. A large number of women (45 percent of respondents) did not have an opinion either way. The major reasons given for the need for a union were: "to fight for higher wages" and "for unity".

Is An Agricultural Labourers' Union Necessary?

(in percent)

Response	Men	Women	All Respondents
Yes	69.3	51.0	62.0
No	21.3	4.0	14.3
No opinion/ Don't know	9.3	45.0	23.7
All Respondents	100	100	100

Polling day, counting day

Persons who were on election duty and staying, as we were, at the Akbar Lodge in Uthamapalayam -- school teachers, horticultural officers, officials from the agriculture department and from civil supplies -- were up from 3 and 4 a.m. and began to leave very early for the booths where they would officiate over polling for the day.

There were three booths -- a separate booth each for men and women and an all voter booth -- in Gokilapuram, and they opened between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. The booths were in school buildings in the south east of the village.

For the men and women of the village, this is a special day. The women finish the morning's housework early, they bathe and change into clean, other-than-workaday sarees (the sort that they would wear to go, for instance, to the temple festival at Veerapandi in May) and they coil and tie their oiled hair and set off for the booths. And so are the men, with washed shirts and dhotis or lungis, perhaps with a towel thrown over the shoulder, and combed hair still wet from the morning's bath, on their way to vote. Gokilapuram is a compact village, in that the settlement is a single contiguous one; it is also a village of open spaces and shaded tamarind groves. It is in one of these open spaces, to the south of the potters' and washerpersons' settlements, that people are now gathered; groups of people of the same party or of friends and kinspeople come to vote, scattered across the area near the three booths. At each of the booths there are people belonging to the two alliances -- the AIADMK distributes betel leaves and arecanut to the voters and the DMK distributes orange-wrappered toffee.

By ten o' clock, about 430 people, or sixteen percent of all voters, have voted and now the queues are fully formed, two lines of men and women before the all-voters' booth and a single line in front of each of the others. Here then are the people of our village, young and old, men and women, and mostly (for that is still our condition) very poor, standing in queues in the late morning sun, with patience and great determination, each person deeply conscious of the value of his and her right to vote, voting without fear and with a commitment that is now near-instinctive -- there is much in this scene that is truly awesome, and deeply moving.

"Why do you not go back to your village", a person come to vote admonishes another who has come from a nearby village. "Do not waste your vote; you are also a poor man -- what else do you have that is worth more than a crore of rupees?" In Kamayakarandanpatti (called K K.Patti to the south of Gokilapuram) later in the morning, we are met by a group of people in Karumaripuram, where some of our survey respondents live. They surround us and complain that the names of voters from 500 households do not figure in the voters' list. "Send a report to Madras to complain that in K.K.Patti, democracy is not working. We are also writing a petition".

The children of the village are near the booths in numbers; they watch and play and generally make a noise until, at intervals, they are chased away by their elders. It has been a tough ten days for many of the children, who are by and large, divided into DMK and AIADMK camps. They have been running around the village shouting slogans; besieging passing buses and cars with urgent campaign propaganda, some flashing two fingers to indicate two leaves and others holding up open palms to signify the rising sun and its rays; and investing pictures on posters of the rival

camp -- when no one is watching -- with moustaches and dabs of tar and cowdung. And sometimes (but seldom, seldom) their little Kurukshetras hurt out in minor scuffles which their parents and passerby adults must break up by shooting away both Pandavas and Kauravas, sometimes by cuffing the ears of the more recalcitrant of them. Today, however, the party's nearly over, and when some one brings a football, a whole crowd of half-tickets runs behind to kick it around the open space, shouting while they go that I'd better to photograph their game than spend film at the polling booth.

The election authorities enforce the very sound rule that all arrack and other liquor shops are to close after canvassing is declared closed and to remain shut until counting is over. But for some today is a happy day· hooch will out, and the really committed ones know where and how to tap the leaks in prohibition policy. My friend M dressed in starched white poplin shirt and freshly-laundered dhoti stands under a tree and strolls in and out of its shade. He is a party man, but is now well full enough not to be dogmatic about it: we meet, he embraces me and says it's been so many years, how long is it since we last met? It has been almost all of 12 hours· but that was many millilitres ago. And others: In K.K.Patti that evening, a well-moustached citizen stands beside a bicycle and firmly tells a friend that his candidate will win. His friend says he will not; "he will", says the first, and bangs his fist on the cycle-saddle, "and I will bet this bicycle on it." Done, says the other, at a slight angle to the perpendicular and similarly pounds. Another person, quite sober, comes between them and wheels his bicycle away.

Polling is over by about 6 p.m. in Gokilapuram. Of the total electorate of 2642, 1906 votes have been cast, a voter turnout of 72.14 percent. This is, however, slightly misleading --- of the people actually in the village on polling day, a much higher proportion voted (only one or two percent of our sample told us that they would not vote); the voters' list includes a large number of persons who are not in the village, including some who have migrated to cardamom and other plantations in the Tamilnadu and Kerala hills. In the constituency as a whole, voter turnout was 75.13 percent, 76.60 percent among men and 73.62 percent among women.

On December 28, by four o'clock in the evening, the crowd in front of the Haji Karutha Rowther College in Uthamapalayam, where counting is in progress, has swelled to a thousand and more. As the evening draws on and night begins to fall, news comes in of the Congress sweep in different parts of the country and of the AIADMK-Congress victories in Tamilnadu. And by 10.30 p.m., the news that we knew for the last few hours is confirmed: Selvendran and Subburayar have won, Agni Raju and Ramakrishnan have lost.

The camps disperse, one to celebrate and the other to lick its wounds.

THE ELECTION RESULTS

There were a total of 151 polling booths in the constituency --- 58 booths for men, 56 women's booths and 37 all-voter booths --- and when counting was over, we were able to get a set of booth-wise results.

At the parliamentary election, Selvendran won a majority of votes in every town and village of the constituency. At the

Assembly election, the DMK was not completely painted over, and Ramakrishnan won majorities, although very narrow ones, in two (Uthamapalayam and Cumbum) of the three towns and in three relatively advanced villages, Kombai, Surulipatti and Pudupatti.

Rural areas voted more heavily with the AIADMK; in urban areas, although the AIADMK parliament candidate was still ahead, the DMK's Assembly candidate was behind the AIADMK by less than a percent, with the AIADMK winning only one town out of three in the constituency. Ramakrishnan actually established a small lead at the urban men's booths, although the rural vote and the women's vote was still enough to see Subburayar through. (An interesting comparative example was at the urban Park Town Assembly constituency in Madras, where an analysis of the results from 50 men's booths and 50 women's booths, randomly chosen, showed that the losing candidate, Mr.Jothi of the Congress-I, actually led Mr.Anbazhagan of the DMK at the women's booths, while Mr.Anbazhagan had a marginally wider lead at the men's.)

Another feature of the booth-wise results is that women voted more closely with men at the parliamentary election than at the assembly and in the urban areas than in the rural.

The difference between the vote for Selvendran and for his Assembly running mate Subburayar (the number of voter who switched party preferences at the parliament and Assembly polls, voting AIADMK-Congress for parliament and DMK for the Assembly) constituted 5.5 percent of the valid vote in the Assembly segment. In the parliament constituency as a whole, the AIADMK candidate gained more votes than his Assembly running mate in each Assembly segment (not excluding MGR at Andipatti), receiving 28135 votes (or 28 percent of

the valid votes polled in the parliamentary election) more than the combined total of their votes. (An even more striking example of voters voting for one alliance at the Centre and the other for the State was at Coimbatore, where 5 out of 6 Assembly seats elected MLAs from the DMK front, but where the CPI(M) candidate for parliament, standing as the candidate of the DMK-led alliance, lost by more than a lakh votes.)

A fortnight after the elections, and the pandals are down, some posters torn and some pasted over; the last of the handbills still clogging the occasional drain; buntings and streamers and wall paintings are still in evidence, but no longer seek the citizen's eye. In a week, tamarind will come to harvest and agricultural labourers from Gokilapuram must prepare to migrate to camp-sites near Cumbum, where they will live in shacks, near a threshing floor. This year the tamarind crop is a bountiful one, and although the labour is arduous -- men climb the trees and beat the fruit down with sticks, while women gather the fallen fruit, load it in baskets and carry it away -- there will be employment every day for the able-bodied till the middle of March, upto the end of the Tamil month of <u>Masi</u>.